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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 001511

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

No Tel Aviv Media Reaction report Wednesday, April 19,
2006, Seventh Day of Passover holiday.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media bannered, and extensively covered Monday afternoon's bombing next to the old central bus station in southern Tel Aviv. Nine people were killed in the assault and around 65 others, including a 16-year-old American tourist, were wounded. The stricken eatery had been bombed three months ago. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the bombing, which was carried out by one of its young activists from Jenin.

Leading media reported that Interim PM Ehud Olmert told the Kadima faction in the Knesset that Israel "will know how to respond." Israel Radio said that the defense establishment will recommend taking actions against Islamic Jihad and increasing the separation between the northern and the southern West Bank. The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior official at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) as saying that, contrary to previous attacks, "We now face a Hamas government that not only does not stop terrorism, but condones it, and encourages it, and gives comfort to its perpetrators." The PMO official was quoted as saying that Israel had little choice but to take matters into its own hands and take sustained, harsh steps against the terrorist organizations. The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic official as saying that from the international community's point of view, there was nothing dramatically different between Monday's attack and the scores that preceded it. The diplomatic official was quoted as saying that there were those who were stressing it was not Hamas that carried out the attack, and that Hamas had continued to respect a truce it declared more than a year ago. Israel Radio quoted Israel's UN representative Ambassador Danny Gillerman as saying in an open debate at the UN Security Council that the Council should take energetic steps against terrorism to prevent further attacks. The station also quoted Gillerman as saying that pronouncements by Muslim leaders at this week's anti-Israeli conference in Tehran constituted a declaration of war.

The media reported that the White House and the State Department condemned the attack and placed responsibility for it with the PA. Leading media reported that White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan called the attack a "despicable act of terror for which there is no excuse or justification." Major media quoted McClellan as saying: "Defense or sponsorship of terrorist acts by officials of the Palestinian cabinet will have the gravest effects on relations between the Palestinian Authority and all states seeking peace in the Middle East." Israel Radio reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

called FM Tzipi Livni to denounce the bombing. Leading media reported that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan condemned the Tel Aviv bombing in and called on the Palestinian Authority to "take a clear public stand against such unjustifiable acts of terrorism." The media also reported that Annan called on all parties to abide by their obligations under international law, and to refrain from actions that further escalate the situation and put civilians at grave risk.

The media reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas denounced the attack, but that Hamas defended it as a "natural reaction." Israel Radio noted that Jordan was the only Arab country that condemned the attack.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Senator Joseph Lieberman, the former Democratic vice presidential candidate and a serving member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told the newspaper that the US is probably incapable of completely destroying the Iranian nuclear program, but that as a last resort it could attempt to knock out "some of the components" in order to "delay and deter it." Maariv quoted the Director of National Intelligence, Ambassador John Negroponte, as saying in an interview with TIME Magazine that Iran will not have nuclear weapons before 2010.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday, a 16-year-old Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded by an IDF shell near Beit Lahiya (northern Gaza Strip). All media reported on progress in Kadima-Labor Party coalition talks.

Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The responsibility for such attacks rests with the Hamas government.... The fight against terror has to be conducted more forcefully."

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Hamas's strategy isn't to rein in bombings, but to encourage them in order to return the Israel Defense Forces to the territories."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "In Jerusalem, the 17th Knesset was sworn in.... In Tel Aviv, Palestinian democracy broke out in a pool of blood."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: "If [Mahmoud] Zahar ... is forced to make do with the Iranian contribution ... his government... will be defined as an isolated government linked to what U.S. President George W. Bush considers the axis of evil."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "Occupation, for as long as it continues, is also meant to protect Palestinians from the settlers.... However, as long as ... there is not even minimal law enforcement, there is no evidence that it is Israel that is in control, and not the settlers."

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Last week I wrote a column on how incredibly bad the Middle East looked from the standpoint of 15 years ago.... Let me try to look at the positive side.... The United States is the world's sole superpower and despite whatever mistakes it makes it is generally a force for good in the region."

Block Quotes:

I. "Sharp Blow Calls For Sharp Response"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 18): "Monday's suicide bombing at Tel Aviv's old central bus station has strategic significance for the future. It is the first suicide attack after Hamas's rise to power in the Palestinian Authority and the first attack after the election of a new government in Israel. The large amounts of Iranian money flowing to Islamic Jihad clearly are allowing it to draft many volunteers, mostly young, for suicide

attacks in Israel. Islamic Jihad perpetrated six suicide attacks in 2005. But the responsibility for such attacks rests with the Hamas government.... Recent declarations about Israel's victory over terror now sound like a bad joke. Israel continues to fail in deterring those who transport the bombers into Israel, with ridiculous punishments meted out for this crime. The fight against terror has to be conducted more forcefully, with more being done to complete the separation fence, which is strangely taking a long time."

II. "Hamas Draws Israel Back Into the Territories"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 18): "Monday's bombing in Tel Aviv was a step in the process of Israel's being drawn ... back into the territories, the vacuum, the black hole that has been created there since Hamas came to power. We are being dragged into that chaos with eyes wide open.... The new [Israeli] government will talk about convergence, the Knesset that was sworn in on Monday can endlessly discuss new permanent borders [for Israel], but we're going in the opposite direction. We are not in a convergence process, but in one of expansion -- not expansion in terms of diplomatic gains, but an expansion of military activity into populated Palestinian areas -- in Gaza and the West Bank. The question isn't whether we'll enter Jenin, Nablus, or Gaza, but when.... With the passing of time, the fact that [Hamas] is increasingly unable to abide by its pledges to the Palestinian public, which might erode its might in the Palestinian street. Hamas is 'dying' to see Israel present a costly 'price-tag,' because it'll stick to its winning formula: The worse off the Palestinians, the better off Hamas is. This implies that Hamas's strategy isn't to rein in bombings, but to encourage them in order to return the Israel Defense Forces to the territories."

III. "Olmert's Test"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (April 18): "The Israeli democracy festival that took place Monday in Jerusalem was mingled with the murderousness of Palestinian democracy that celebrated in Tel Aviv. Those two democracies continue to embrace each other in a lethal squeeze. In Jerusalem, the 17th Knesset was sworn in.... In Tel Aviv, Palestinian democracy broke out in a pool of blood.... Now is the time of Islamic Jihad. Who's next? Fatah's Tanzim, certainly -- because when there's a struggle between Fatah and Jihad, or between any two factions, Palestinian democracy always channels into the old, proven path through which the central Palestinian regime will be embarrassed -- the killing of Jews. Ehud Olmert will today face a significant leadership test.... Will he declare the Palestinian Authority an enemy country? For the first time since Oslo, a government that doesn't condemn terrorism is sitting in Ramallah. The opposite is true. Its heads view terrorism as a legitimate resistance tool."

IV. "An Inconvenient Attack"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote on page one of Ha'aretz (April 18): "Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar are investing a lot into extricating the Palestinian Authority from its financial troubles and international isolation. Its image as a terror government damages these efforts.... The Hamas government is trying to recruit alternative sources of funding. Zahar is on a fund-raising trip to Arab states and appears to have notched some success.... It is clear that Monday's terror attack is harmful to this mission, since no Arab state wants to be seen as a government that is identified with or assists terrorist activity. If Zahar does not manage to win more aid from Arab states and is forced to make do with the Iranian contribution, he will be endangering the position of his government, which will be defined as an isolated government linked to what U.S. President George W. Bush considers the axis of evil."

V. "No Arrests Yet"

Ha'aretz editorialized (April 18): "The clashes are continuing between the kibbutz volunteers who help Palestinian farmers work their land near the Elon Moreh settlement and the settlers who beat them and fire at them. This week settlers went to Kibbutz Givat Hashlosha to give Yoel Marshak, one of the volunteers, a personal threatening letter.... The single arrest in the meantime was made at Marshak's initiative, not that

of the police. Marshak and his colleagues searched for, and found, the rifle bullets fired at them two weeks ago, and a ballistics test led to the arrest of two soldiers.... Occupation is not only checkpoints that protect against terror within the Green Line, thereby making Palestinian life miserable. Occupation, for as long as it continues, is also meant to protect Palestinians from the settlers and make sure they can carry on reasonable daily lives, at least in their limited living space, now that checkpoints have made movement between the communities a nightmare for them. However, as long as a harassed civilian delivers the bullet to the police officer's desk, and there is not even minimal law enforcement, there is no evidence that it is Israel that is in control, and not the settlers."

VI. "Now, the Good News"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (April 18): "Last week I wrote a column on how incredibly bad the Middle East looked from the standpoint of 15 years ago, just after the Kuwait war.... Let me try to look at the positive side.... Radical Islamists have not yet taken over any Arab country, with violent revolts in Algeria and Egypt being put down. Hamas now rules the Palestinians and Islamists are making gains in several places but they are still stuck in opposition. Syrian forces have withdrawn from Lebanon and that country's peculiar version of democracy has been restored.... There is a liberal, pro-democratic movement now in the Arab world.... Saddam Hussein has been overthrown as Iraq's dictator.... Iraq has a chance of becoming a stable democracy, not a trouble-free one but it is a real possibility.... Israel is more secure, despite continuing terrorist threats, than it has been at any time in the past.... The United States is the world's sole superpower and despite whatever mistakes it makes it is generally a force for good in the region.... The war on terrorism has enjoyed some real successes, though obviously it is far from won, to say the least.... There, don't you feel better? I know I do."

JONES